

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 28

By Clemmons

A RESOLUTION to honor Paul Vasterling upon his retirement as artistic director of Nashville Ballet.

WHEREAS, it is our privilege to recognize those leaders in the artistic community whose cultural stewardship and commitment to excellence have contributed to the thriving arts landscape in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Paul Vasterling, artistic director of Nashville Ballet, who recently announced his retirement at the conclusion of the 2022-2023 season, bringing to a close thirty-three years of exceptional leadership with the company; and

WHEREAS, the longest-serving artistic director in Nashville Ballet history, Mr. Vasterling will be named artistic director emeritus upon his retirement, as voted by the board of directors in recognition of his indelible contributions to the organization; and

WHEREAS, for more than three decades, twenty-five of which were at the helm of the company as artistic director, Paul Vasterling has been foundational to Nashville Ballet, transforming the organization from a troupe of twelve dancers into the largest professional ballet company in Tennessee, with thirty-three professional company dancers, a second company, and a renowned ballet school that attracts dancers from across the country; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Vasterling joined Nashville Ballet in 1989 as a company dancer and was appointed artistic director in 1998; during his tenure, he has created over forty original ballets, including *Firebird*, *Seasons*, *Lucy Negro Redux*, *Carmina Burana*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Peter Pan*, *Lizzie Borden*, *Dracula*, *Appalachian Spring*, and *Nashville's Nutcracker*, which has been enjoyed by over half a million patrons in Middle Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Paul Vasterling has worked to prioritize accessibility and inclusivity by removing social barriers to ballet, including expanding Nashville Ballet's free Community

Engagement programming, undertaking national audition searches to bring Black, indigenous, and people of color to train in Nashville, and instituting a flesh-tone tights and shoes policy for company dancers and students; and

WHEREAS, he also spearheaded the company's free digital programming, culminating with the broadcast debut of a made-for-television performance of his original ballet, *Nashville's Nutcracker*, which earned him his first Emmy Award; also filmed for television, his *New York Times*-acclaimed ballet *Black Lucy and the Bard* premiered nationwide on PBS' multi-award-winning *Great Performances* series in the autumn of 2022; and

WHEREAS, passionate about supporting the works of up-and-coming choreographers, he created the Emergence series in 2004 in order to give numerous choreographers the space to create new works and learn to work alongside musicians as they created an original score; and

WHEREAS, a talented musical arranger in his own right, Paul Vasterling led Nashville Ballet to commission over twenty-two original scores from local singer-songwriters, nationally renowned musicians such as Louis York and The Shindellas, and Grammy Award-winning artists including Ben Folds and Rhiannon Giddens; he has highlighted the artistry and history of Nashville by partnering with institutions such as Nashville Children's Theatre, The Bluebird Café, and the Nashville Symphony; and

WHEREAS, under his direction, the company has toured in South America, in Europe, and throughout the United States, debuting at the Kennedy Center in 2017; beyond his own choreography, Mr. Vasterling has expanded the company's repertoire to include works by George Balanchine, Donald Byrd, Jiří Kylián, Jennifer Archibald, Val Caniparoli, and Christopher Wheeldon, among many others; and

WHEREAS, Artistic Director Paul Vasterling concurrently served as Nashville Ballet CEO from 2010 to 2018, during which time the organization's operating budget increased by 800 percent and the administrative team more than doubled in size; and

WHEREAS, as CEO, he oversaw two significant expansions of Nashville Ballet's studios and administrative offices—the purchase of the Martin Center in 2000, followed by the launch of the ELEVATE Capital Campaign in 2014, which raised \$5.2 million to further expand facilities to house seven world-class studios, additional administrative space, and an on-site production warehouse and performance venue; and

WHEREAS, highly regarded throughout his profession, Mr. Vasterling is a Fulbright scholar and the recipient of fellowships from New York University's Center for Ballet and the Arts and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, as well as three National Endowment for the Arts grants to support choreography creation, and his original works have been staged by companies all over the world; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Vasterling has helped shape Nashville Ballet into a world-class organization that is pushing boundaries, both in Music City and in the dance world, and it is most fitting that we recognize him at this time; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Paul Vasterling as he takes his leave as artistic director of Nashville Ballet, commending his tireless devotion and creative vision and extending our best wishes for every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.